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Message Text

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ACTION SS-30

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 SSO-00 NSCE-00 /031 W
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O P 272104Z FEB 74
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USDEL JEC PARIS

S E C R E T GENEVA 1303

EXDIS

FROM ALDRICH

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PARM, ICRC
SUBJECT: PRG QUESTION AT LAWS OF WAR CONFERENCE

1. AT CLOSE OF TODAY'S CHAOTIC PLENARY SESSION (DESCRIBED SEPTEL) USSR DELEGATE SOUGHT ME OUT TO MAKE OFFER OF COMPROMISE PACKAGE DEAL ON PARTICIPATION QUESTIONS. HE SAID THEY AND THEIR FRIENDS WOULD SETTLE FOR PRG PARTICIPATION IN CONFERENCE WITHOUT, RPT, WITHOUT, RIGHT OF VOTE IF WE WOULD NOT INSIST ON VOTING ON PRG SEPARATELY. HE ALSO ADDED THREAT THAT, IF WE REJECTED THIS OFFER, HE WOULD BE FORCED TO RENEGE ON DRAFT RESOLUTION ACCEPTED TODAY BY ALL REGIONAL GROUPS ON INVITATION TO NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS. SOVS WOULD DO THIS, HE SAID AND DEMAND VOTING RIGHTS FOR THESE MOVEMENTS, DESPITE THEIR RELUCTANCE TO SEE THEM GIVEN VOTING RIGHTS, BECAUSE OF OUR FIRM OPPOSITION TO PRG.

2. PRESENT FACTS ARE THAT WE HAVE DEFEATED SOVIET EFFORTS TO KEEP AFRICAN AND ARAB PARTICIPATION ISSUES TIED TO PRG ISSUE BY ACHIEVING AGREEMENT ON HANDLING OF ALL BUT PRG. AS REPORTED SEPTEL, WE AGREED TO CONSENSUS INVITATION TO GUINEA-BISSAU AND NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS WHICH WOULD BE ACCEPTED WITHOUT VOTING BUT WITH RIGHT OF ALL DISSENTERS, INCLUDING US, TO STATE RESERVATIONS AND OBJECTIONS. THIS MEANT THAT SOLE VOTE ON
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PROPOSED INVITATIONS WOULD BE ON PRG QUESTION, AND AT A POINT

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WHERE MOST ARABS AND AFRICANS WOULD HAVE NO SIGNIFICANT INTEREST IN IT.

3. SOVIETS HAVE OBVIOUSLY BEEN VERY NERVOUS ABOUT RUNNING THIS RISK, BUT I THOUGHT THEY WERE LIKELY TO DO ONE OF TWO THINGS: EITHER DROP REQUEST FOR PRG INVITATION ON GROUNDS THAT SWISS AND AMERICANS HAD EXERTED UNDUE PRESSURE, THUS DEFEATING PRG RIGHTS, OR PROPOSE CHANGING PRG INVITATION TO ONE FOR OBSERVER STATUS, WITH CAVEAT THAT GVN WOULD ALSO BE REDUCED TO OBSERVER STATUS. LATTER OBVIOUSLY MOST DIFFICULT AS IT WOULD EASILY BE ACCEPTED BY CONFERENCE. EITHER SOVIETS HAVE NOT THOUGHT OF THIS OR THEY ARE RESERVING IT FOR USE IF US REJECTS THEIR PROPOSAL.

4. KEY ELEMENT, IN MY VIEW, IS THREAT. IT SEEMS CERTAIN THAT SOVIETS KNOW THAT EC 9 DELS AND OTHER WESTERN DELS HAVE AGREED THEY WOULD REQUEST INSTRUCTIONS TO WITHDRAW FROM CONFERENCE IF NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS GIVEN VOTING RIGHTS AS IF THEY WERE STATES. MEANING OF SOVIET THREAT IS, THEREFORE, THAT THEY PREPARED WRECK CONFERENCE AND FORCE WESTERN DEPARTURE, RATHER THAN ACCEPT POSSIBILITY OF DEFEAT ON PRG ISSUE. THEY MAY BE BLUFFING, BUT FACT IS THEY HAVE BERY LITTLE INTEREST IN SUBSTANCE OF CONFERENCE. IF THE THREAT IS ONLY A BLUFF, OUR REFUSAL TO ACCEPT THEIR PROPOSAL WOULD PROBABLY RESULT IN THEIR CHANGING THEIR RESOLUTION TO PROVIDE FOR NO VOTE FOR PRG. AS SO CHANGED, IT WOULD EASILY BE ADOPTED. IF, ON OTHER HAND, THREAT IS REAL, CONFERENCE WILL BE DESTROYED BY WESTERN WALKOUT AND RELATIONS BETWEEN US AND SOME ARAB AND AFRICANS COUNTRIES WILL BE DAMAGED.

5. I REALIZE THIS CHOICE IS DIFFICULT ONE AND THAT GVN (AND PERHAPS USG) MAY FIND IT HARD TO MAKE NECESSARY DECISION BY FEBRUARY 28 (TOMORROW) AT 9 AM GENEVA TIME, WHEN I AM TO SEE SOVIET DELEGATE (PLENARY RESUMES AT 10). MY RECOMMENDATION IS THAT GVN AND USG ACCEPT SOVIET PROPOSAL, ASSUMING I CAN NAIL DOWN FIRMLY ASSURANCE OF NO SUBSEQUENT ATTACK BY SOVS OR THEIR FRIENDS AT THIS CONFERENCE ON GVN STATUS AS FULL VOTING MEMBER.

6. VOTE COUNTS VERY INEXACT, AND OUR SHOWS EVENLY DIVIDED VOTE. SOME OF SOVIET NERVOUSNESS MAY RESULT FROM IGNORANCE OF NUMBER OF WESTERN ABSTENTIONS. WITH PSYCHOLOGICAL CLIMATE CREATED BY OUR MASSIVE DEFEAT TODAY ON TWO-THIRDS VOTING PROPOSAL, FACT IS

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THAT CHANCES OF WINNING PRG VOTE TOMORROW PROBABLY LESS THAN EVEN. ALTHOUGH SOVS DOUBTLESS WANT U.S. AND WESTERN ACCEPTANCE OF PRG, EVEN IN A LOWER STATUS THAN GVN, WE CAN POINT TO PECULIAR HUMANITARIAN NATURE OF CONFERENCE AND FACT THAT PRG STATUS WOULD BE SAME AS AFRICAN AND ARAB NATIONAL LIBERATION MOVEMENTS TO MITIGATE ADVERSE EFFECTS.

7. IF DECISION NOT REACHED BY TOMORROW (THURSDAY) MORNING

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GENEVA TIME AND IF NOT INSTRUCTED OTHERWISE, I SHALL INFORM SOVIETS THAT I AM NOT, RPT NOT, AUTHORIZED TO ACCEPT PROPOSAL BUT URGE THAT THEY NOT TAKE RECKLESS ACTION TO DESTROY CONFERENCE. IF THEY REALLY SEEM BENT ON DOING SO, I SHALL SUGGEST ON "PERSONAL" BASIS THAT THEY CAN ACHIEVE RESULTS THEY WANT BY SIMPLY CHANGING PROPOSED PRG RES. TO ONE CALLING FOR NON-VOTING STATUS AND PRESSING IT TO THE VOTE. PLEASE INSTRUCT URGENTLY.
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